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20-550-1902

EVERY REGULAR PHYSICIAN IN THE
STATE SHOULD BELONG TO A
COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY AFFIL-
IATED WITH THE STATE SOCIETY

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DECEMBER, 1902.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

Attention is called to an article in the present number of the JOURNAL by Dr. F. E. Stewart.

The evils referred to by Dr. Stewart and the method of remedying them as suggested by him have existed for nearly a quarter of a century. The Smithsonian Institution, the Department of Agriculture, the American Medical Association, the American Pharmaceutical Association, and, in fact, every learned body and every professional man of prominence to whom or before whom this matter has been presented, has unreservedly advocated some plan for securing the standardization of chemicals, drugs, pharmaceuticals, and the principal food stuffs; yet nothing has, as yet, been done. The reason why such an excellent project has never reached anything more than the stage of suggestion and approbation, is not far to seek. It is simply lack of organization. A United States Senator, some years ago, when approached on the subject, stated that the medical and pharmaceutical professions could obtain any legislation they really wanted, if they were sure that they wanted it and acted as a concerted whole. Lack of organization has heretofore prevented any action looking toward the remedy of the present evils. It is urged that we have a fixed standard in the Pharmacopœia; true, but the Pharmacopœia is a dose that is elective with the manufacturer, and he almost invariably elects, in a lordly fashion peculiar to his kind, to disregard it. The condition has grown so much worse, within the last few years, that at present the physician who writes a prescription has no certainty that it will be compounded alike by two druggists, using preparations of different manufacturers, and he is being forced to prescribe semi-proprietary mixtures, the actual composition of which he is in ignorance and the valuable and wonderful properties of which are being constantly urged upon him, not by any one with authority to speak, but the manufacturer who can see nothing except the advantage of lauding his mixture and the consequent dollars that may be added to his bank account. No reputable phy-

sician can mention the name of a newly introduced drug or preparation, in a scientific paper read before a medical society or perhaps written for publication, no matter how excellent it may be, without rendering himself liable to the possible false accusation of having been influenced by the manufacturer. No one can go into the open market and buy supposedly pure drugs or chemicals with any assurance that they are chemically pure. The evil is deplorable, but the remedy seems clearly to be presented in the plan suggested by Dr. Stewart and formally approved by the learned societies before which it has been presented. A bureau of standardization, backed and controlled by the medical and pharmaceutical professions of the whole country, of a personnel so far above reproach that its honesty could not be questioned, would very quickly settle the matter. It would compel the manufacturers throughout the country to follow one standard of purity and strength, one formula in the compounding of pharmacopœial preparations, and to supply a line of drugs that could be relied upon to be the same wherever prescribed, north, south, east or west. And such a bureau is not a highly rose-colored dream; it is an actual possibility and can be put upon a self-supporting business basis wherein the man who makes the money pays the bills; where the manufacturer, who makes his money directly through the physician and the pharmacist, may be compelled to manufacture as he should and to pay for the guarantee that his product complies with the accepted standards of purity and formula. An argument directly to the point is furnished in an editorial which appeared in "American Medicine" for November 1, 1902. It quotes the following from a recent number of the Lancet:

Our experience proves that it is becoming almost impossible to admit articles in the columns of the Lancet from the pens of general practitioners and others dealing with the results of their therapeutic investigations into the value of new preparations, because all the favorable passages will at once be pounced upon by the enterprising purveyor, perhaps garbled, almost certainly dissociated from their context, and scattered broadcast over the land. We are thus, perhaps, prevented, and by the very people who would profit by the publicity, from putting before our readers papers the practical value of which may be great. The public, the medical profession, and the purveyors alike suffer. The only way to remedy the position is not a satisfactory one, but it is one to which we must have recourse.

The editorial comment upon this text is as follows:

It is true that there are many new pharmaceutical preparations of value to the profession that should be brought to the notice of medical men by good practitioners in reputable medical journals. But the abuse pointed out by the Lancet is a veritable one. It is worse in our country than in England, due to the absurdly large number of medical journals and the professional puff-writer. It strikes us that the chief sufferer is the manufacturer of good products who will not push them by dishonest methods. It is

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Next Annual Meeting will be held at Santa Barbara on the third Tuesday in April.

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NOTICE TO ALL MEMBERS

Under Art. VI, Sec. 6, of the new Constitution and By-Laws, all members intending to present papers at the next meeting of the State Society, April, 1903, MUST send their papers to the Chairman of the Committee on Scientific Program ONE MONTH BEFORE THE DATE OF THE MEETING. The papers must be examined by this committee and abstracted for the program, which program must be made up at least fifteen days before the meeting. At the last meeting of the Society it was voted to strictly adhere to this requirement, so that if your paper is not sent in by the fifteenth of March, it can not be presented to the State Society at the meeting in April.

SEND YOUR PAPERS TO DR. J. HENRY BARBAT, Chairman, 590 Sutter Street, San Francisco.